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RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2016

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SUBJECT: ITURI UPDATE: MRC MILITIA SIGNS CEASE-FIRE
AGREEMENT WITH GDRC

REF: KINSHASA 1165

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Militia leader Mattheiu Ngonjolo and the GDRC signed a cease-fire agreement in Ituri District July 26, bringing a possible end to the conflict between the GDRC and the Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC). According to a joint communique, the MRC and the GDRC concluded an accord to put an immediate end to the armed conflict in Ituri. The agreement was signed by Colonel Mukunto Kiyana-Tim, representing the GRDC, Ngonjolo on behalf of the MRC, and MONUC-Bunia Head of Office Charles Gomis as the "facilitator" and "observer" of the negotiations. As reported reftel, talks between the MRC and the GDRC have been underway since militia leader Peter Karim released five MONUC hostages July 8.

¶2. (U) According to the communique, the two sides met to begin "to create the conditions for the return of peace, the reconciliation between all Congolese communities and the consolidation of the electoral process." Gomis said in exchange for ending hostilities, the GDRC agreed to integrate all militia members from the MRC into the Congolese military and to grant them amnesty. The communique stated that the GDRC and the MRC also met to ensure that the July 30 elections take place under the best possible security conditions. To that end, the MRC agreed to facilitate the free circulation of IDPs so that they could return to their electoral districts to vote in elections and return to their homes. (Comment: This is an empty promise as it is too late for most IDPs to return before the July 30 elections. End comment.)

¶3. (C) Gomis said the GDRC and MRC representatives will meet again July 28 in Kambutso (approximately eight miles southeast of Bunia) to discuss further details of the agreement. Gomis said the exact process of integration for the militia members has not yet been finalized. In addition, neither side has agreed on whether the MRC members will have to go through the process of "brassage" (integration). (Note: As part of Karim's agreement to disarm the Front for National Integration -- FNI -- militia, ex-combatants will not be required to enter the brassage process. End note.)

¶4. (C) Not included in this latest agreement is the Patriotic Force of Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) militia, led by Cobra Matata. Gomis said separate discussions are currently underway in Ituri with Matata regarding a possible cease-fire.

¶5. (C) Comment: While the news of an MRC cease-fire is welcome, many details remain to be worked out to guarantee the MRC and other militia forces completely disarm. For example, if the MRC members -- along with those of the FNI --

remain in Ituri after being integrated into the Congolese military, there will be significant temptations to continue in illegal economic activity and harassment of local populations. Whether the GDRC has ulterior motives in co-opting these militia forces -- possibly to arrest them at a future date -- is unknown, but the militias' inclusion into the military in Ituri will likely pose more discipline problems. Nonetheless, one threat to Ituri's stability may have been neutralized, at least in the short term. End comment.

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